

CPA Project Application Form

[CPC Use Only: Date Received 10/23/23 By: KBerry
Assigned CPC #2025- 8

If possible, use word processor to fill out form. Please answer all questions, use "N/A" if not applicable.

1. a.) Applicant Name and Organization: Last Theall First Aubrey
Organization(s) (if appropriate) Groton Historical Commission

b.) Regional Project: Yes ? or No? ? If Yes, Town/Organization:
Not a regional project

2. Submission Date: 10/23/2023

3. Applicant Address: St. 197 Maple Avenue
City/ State: Groton, MA ZIP: 01450

4. Ph. # 617-314-5755 Email: aubreytheall@hotmail.com

5. CPA Purpose. Check all that apply:
Community Housing ☐ (Affordable Housing ☐ Historic Preservation* ☒ Open Space ☐
Recreation ☐

* As per MA General Law Chapter 44B, proposed historic projects that are not on the structures listed on the state's registry of historic places require a determination by the Groton Historic Commission that the proposed project is of historic significance.

6. Town Committee or boards participating: Groton Historical Commission

7. Project Location/Address: Marlins Pond Rd (Gibbet Hill Farm)

8. Project Name: Bancroft Castle Preservation Study

9. Additional Responsible Parties (If applicable):

Role (specify)	Name	Address	Ph. (w) (cell)	Email
Property/Site Owner				
Project Manager				
Lead Architect				
Project Contractor				
Project Consultants				
Other:				
Other				

10. As appropriate, indicate if proposal requires P&S agreement ☐ Deed ☐
Option agreement ☐ Other-describe: N/A

11. a.) Assessor info. (map/ block/ lot id.(s)): 116/311/ b.) Tax classification type: 1320

12. Permits required: Zoning: ? Historic Preservation: ? Other: ?

13. Historic Commission Approval signoff (when required): To be provided prior to full application Date: TBD

14 a.) Project cost \$ \$5,000-15,000 : Estimate ☒ Professional quote ☐ b.) Requested from CPC:
\$5,000-15,000 c.) Committed from other source: \$ N/A If applicable: annual anticipated total
income: \$ N/A Annual anticipated total expense: \$ N/A Anticipated net income
(loss): \$ N/A Name of Estimator name/company: Bid process in accordance with CPC requirements to be conducted prior to final application

15. CCP Objectives - use codes from **Section 5 of Community Preservation Plan** to indicate all that apply: 5.1.2

16. Project Timelines: Proposed Start Date: 7/1/24 Projected Complete Date: 9/30/24

17. Estimated Delivery Date of Completion Report to CPC: 10/15/24

18. Project description and explanation (attach additional sheets as needed): _____

The Groton Historical Commission proposes to commission a study by a qualified masonry conservation firm as to the structural condition of the remains of the Bancroft Castle atop Gibbet Hill. This study would additionally outline a strategy to preserve these remains to the maximum extent possible and include professional estimates as to the cost of that preservation plan. Please see the attached narrative project summary for additional detail.

19. Feasibility: No feasibility concerns are known to exist.

20. List of attachments: Narrative project summary (attached).

21. Additional Information: It is anticipated that this study would precede a subsequent fundraising effort (which could include an application for further for CPA funding) for the actual preservation of the remnants of the Bancroft Castle.

22. Management Plan: Aubrey Theall and Joshua Vollmar of the Groton Historical Commission would be charged with administering a request for proposals in accordance with the specifications of the Community Preservation Plan, managing the selected vendor and the project through completion.

23. Applicant Signature:  Date: 10/23/23

Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Introduction:

The "castle" on Gibbet Hill, one of Groton's most recognizable landmarks, was created starting in 1904 for Gen. William Amos Bancroft, a Groton native who became president of the Boston Elevated Railway in 1899. It was intended to be the stables and carriage house for his Shawfieldmont estate, an adjunct to the mansion planned for the crest of the hill but never built. Despite its old-world appearance, the castle contained plumbing and electricity, and was built with modern formed concrete. In 1906, Bancroft had parts of the interior finished off to be used as a seasonal residence for his family.

Bancroft sold the property in 1912, and two years later, the castle found a new use as a long-term recovery hospital run by Dr. Harold W. Ayres, which focused on tuberculosis patients, and after a government contract in 1920, on World War I veterans. The hospital closed in 1928, and the next year, the property was rented to the elite Groton Hunt Club for use as their clubhouse. However, on the evening of July 4, 1930, trespassers on the property set off firecrackers, catching the castle on fire, and the wood portion of the structure was a total loss.

In 2000, Groton residents Steve and Nancy Webber purchased the castle along with Gibbet Hill to preserve it from development. In 2002, a conservation restriction and easement were placed on the property, which allowed the castle to be open to the public.

Although minimal restoration was made to the ruins at the time they became accessible to the public, ongoing deterioration of the structure has continued for more than 93 years since the fire in 1930. As the site has become one of the most visited tourist attractions in North Central Massachusetts, the danger of both the site being further damaged and of someone being injured continues to grow. The dangers were most recently highlighted in the winter of 2022-2023, when a tree fell on and destabilized the northeast corner of the structure, which has been cordoned off for public safety.

Without intervention the remains will continue to deteriorate and eventually their significant features will be lost.

Proposal:

The Groton Historical Commission ("GHC"), partnering with Webber Family (property owner) and the entities that hold the conservation restrictions on the property (the Groton Conservation Commission and Massachusetts DEP) propose to commission a professional study by a qualified masonry conservation firm to assess the condition of and determine what reasonably and economically can be done to preserve the remaining structure. The Historical Commission would also utilize this process as an opportunity to have the Castle inventoried in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's MACRIS system. The Webber Family and Groton

Conservation Commission have endorsed this concept. As of the time of the writing of this summary the Historical Commission has reached out to MA DEP and is working on securing their endorsement.

Costs:

Before the submission of a complete CPA funding application GHC would conduct a formal request for proposals (in accordance with CPC policy) from qualified masonry preservation firms to assess the condition of the remaining structure and develop a conservation plan. It is roughly estimated that the order of magnitude for this project is \$5,000-\$15,000.

Management Plan:

GHC members Aubrey Theall (Chair) and Joshua Vollmar would be responsible for organizing the request for proposals, selecting the most appropriate firm and providing project oversight. Should this project be approved at the Spring 2024 Town Meeting we would target completion by September 30, 2024.

Previous CPA funded projects:

The Groton Historical Commission has successfully completed numerous CPA funded projects, a listing of which will be provided in the full application should the project reach this stage.

Conformance to CPA allowable spending chart:

"Section 2 of the CPA legislation defines historic resources, preservation, and rehabilitation. Under CPA, an historic resource is defined as a building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact that is either:

- listed on the State Register of Historic Places; or
- determined by the local Historic Commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the city or town.

CPA funds may be spent on the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources."

Prior to submitting a full application the Groton Historical Commission would make a formal determination (by vote) as to the significance of the Bancroft Castle as to its historical, archeological and cultural significance to the Town.

Summary:

The Bancroft Castle is a well-known, much visited and much loved piece of Groton's history that is deteriorating and is in danger of eventual loss. Assessing the condition of the remains and developing a preservation plan is a necessary first step in helping to ensure that this asset is preserved for the enjoyment of the public for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted:

Aubrey Theall, Chair, Groton Historical Commission
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